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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 000999

SENSITIVE  
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SUBJECT: MEXICO'S PRI APPROVES PLURINOMINAL CANDIDATE LIST

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Charles V. Barclay.  
Reason: 1.4 (b), (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Mexico's political parties are completing selection processes for candidates in the July legislative contest, with the PRI the first to release its candidate list for the proportional representational slots. The PRI has stacked its plurinominal list with party luminaries or their family members, and is perceived as being heavily weighted toward the party's "old guard," including party president Beatriz Paredes. The PRI arrived at the plurinominal candidate list with little public infighting, even while months of negotiation and attempts at powergrabs by party luminaries certainly went on behind the scene. Nevertheless, the PRI's proportional representation slate at first glance appears to belie the PRI's attempt to cast the party as focused on renewing its leadership cadre. End Summary.

Out with the Old, in With the Same?  
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¶2. (C) Mexico's political parties are completing selection processes for candidates in the July legislative contest after the deadline for submitting their slates was extended -- at the National Action Party's (PAN) request -- to April

¶15. Of the three major parties, the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) was the first to settle on its candidates for the 200 proportional representation, or "plurinominal seats," in a unanimous vote last week. The Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) released its slate within a day of the PRI. The PAN came in a more distant third, which Center for Social and Public Opinion Research (CESOP) Director General and PRI party insider Carlos Casillas claims was intended to prevent PANistas who did not receive a seat from defecting to the PRI.

¶3. (C) The plurinominal seats are divvied up amongst parties according to vote share and are selected from open-party lists for which the country is divided into five regional districts. They are often used to shepherd into congress party heavyweights or more controversial party members without having to run in a popularly elected contest, and those at the top five or so of the regional lists almost certainly receive deputy slots. The PRI's National Executive Committee (CEN) is charged with drawing up the lists, which result from months of negotiation between the different party powerbrokers and factions.

¶4. (C) The PRI has stacked its plurinominal list with party luminaries or their family members, including party president Beatriz Paredes, a niece of former President Salinas, the son

of former presidential candidate Roberto Madrazo, and Madrazo's former campaign adviser, Carlos Flores Rico. The slate is perceived by many local commentators and observers as being heavily weighted toward the party's "old guard" -- either the leaders themselves or their close relatives -- rather than favoring new and emerging figures. Casillas noted that Paredes' allies probably have the most representation on the list, with 15 or 16 in top slots. Each PRI governor has one or two proxies high on the list, with PRI heavyweight and Senator Manlio Fabio Beltrones also being well represented (though less well than Paredes). Other PRI luminaries with proxy representation, such as Madrazo and Salinas, almost certainly chose to back their relatives to ensure their interests are loyally represented in Congress. Union leaders and CEN members also have representation on the candidate slate.

15. (C) Paredes' decision to list herself as a plurinominal candidate has drawn significant attention as a sign that she may step down as party president. Paredes almost certainly is planning on assuming leadership of the PRI Chamber of Deputies bloc upon her election, which would make it near impossible for her to continue her duties as president. She has publicly indicated she will not relinquish her position, but probably would have to take a year and a half leave of absence from Congress in order to complete her party presidency. Paredes could conceivably maintain the presidency and settle with just a normal deputy slot, but PRI contacts who know her say she would be unwilling to be simply one of five hundred legislators. Her reluctance to turn the party over to Jesus Murillo Karam, currently the Secretary

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General and second-in-command, probably stems from the fear that it would increase the influence of Karam's ally, Mexico State Governor Enrique Pena Nieto. Casillas notes that Paredes' decision to pursue the PRI congressional leadership probably is a good sign that she is, indeed, angling for the presidential nomination for the 2012 presidential elections, as PRI Congressional Coordinator would be a highly visible platform from which to launch a campaign.

Comment  
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16. (C) As it has in previous party decisionmaking and in sharp contrast other major parties, the PRI arrived at the plurinominal candidate list with little public infighting. Months of negotiation and attempts at powergrabs by party luminaries -- such as Beltrones, Paredes, and several key governors -- certainly went into the final list of 200, but it was done and kept behind the scene. Nevertheless, the PRI's proportional representation slate at first glance appears to belie the PRI's -- and particularly Paredes' -- attempt to cast the party as focused on rebuilding itself and renewing its leadership cadre.

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